

# Preparing to Read *The Crucible*

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Rereading, Summarizing, Marking the Text, Quickwrite, Predicting, KWL Chart, Think-Pair-Share

In the My Notes space, annotate the text by summarizing each of the following passages about the Puritans' feelings about God, sin, the Devil, or humankind.

Excerpts from **Sinners in  
the Hands of  
an Angry God**  
by Jonathan Edwards

1. "[Men] deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God's using His power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins."
2. "The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods."
3. "The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints, whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or furnace of fire and brimstone."
4. "God has laid Himself under no obligation, by any promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen."
5. "So that, thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked: His anger is as great towards them as those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of His wrath in hell; and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up for one moment. The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own heart is struggling to break out."

**Quickwrite:** How might the attitudes and feelings reflected in this sermon connect with a belief in witchcraft?

## My Notes

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## My Notes



### WORD CONNECTIONS

*Convert* uses the Latin word *vertere* meaning “to turn.” *Introvert*, *versus*, *subvert*, *version* all come from this word.

### GRAMMAR & USAGE

The colon is used to introduce ideas, examples, or quotations that explain or expand the idea that comes before the colon. The colon occurs at the end of a clause, not after a verb or a preposition. For example, notice the way Shapiro begins the third paragraph. She introduces the idea that Brattle’s words are still true today with the short sentence “He was right.” What follows after the colon explains her point.

## Article

# The Lessons of Salem

by Laura Shapiro

After 300 years, people are still fascinated by the notorious Puritan witch hunts – maybe because history keeps repeating itself.

Chunk  
1

They came for Martha Carrier at the end of May. There was plenty of evidence against her: Allen Toothaker testified that several of his cattle had suffered “strange deaths” soon after he and Carrier had an argument, and little Phoebe Chandler said that shortly before being stricken with terrible pains, she had heard Carrier’s voice telling her she was going to be poisoned. Even Carrier’s children spoke against her: they confessed that they, too, were witches and that it was their mother who had converted them to evil. (Their statements were not introduced in court, however — perhaps because two of her sons had to be tied up until they bled from their mouth before they would confess. A small daughter spoke more freely; she told officials that her mother was a black cat.) Most damning of all was the evidence offered by half a dozen adolescent girls, who accused Carrier of tormenting them and who fell into writhing fits as she stood before the magistrate. They shrieked that they had seen the Devil whispering into Carrier’s ear. “You see you look upon them and they fall down,” said the magistrate. “It is a shameful thing that you should mind these folks that are out of their wits,” answered Carrier. “I am wronged.” On Aug. 19, 1692, she was hanged on Gallows Hill in Salem Mass., for the crime of witchcraft.

Last week marked the 300th anniversary of Carrier’s death, an execution carried out during the most notorious summer in Massachusetts history. Between June and September of 1692, 14 women and 5 men were hanged in Salem as witches, and 1 man was tortured to death. Scores more were named as witches and imprisoned. “What will be the issue of these troubles, God only knows,” wrote Thomas Brattle, a merchant in nearby Boston who was horrified by the events. “I am afraid that ages will not wear off that reproach and those stains which these things will leave behind upon our land.”

He was right: even now the Salem witch trials haunt the imaginations of hundreds of thousands of Americans, tourists and history buffs alike,

Like all witch hunts, the troubles of 1692 began in a community that felt torn and besieged. Salem Village, now the town of Danvers, was about eight miles from the seat of local power in Salem Town. A contentious place, chafing to pull free of Salem Town and its taxes, Salem Village had suffered bitter disputes over its first three ministers before settling on a fourth, the Rev. Samuel Parris. During the winter of 1691–92, a few girls, mostly teenagers, started gathering in Parris’s kitchen. There they listened to stories, perhaps voodoo tales, told by his Western Indian slave Tituba; they also tried to discern their future husbands by fortunetelling — dropping an egg white into a glass and seeing what shape it took. For girls raised in Puritanism, which demanded lifelong discipline and self-control, these sessions with Tituba represented a rare and risky bit of indulgence in pure fancy. Too risky, perhaps. Suddenly one after another of the girls was seized with fits. Their families were bewildered: the girls raved and fell into convulsions; one of them ran around on all fours and barked. Dr. William Griggs was called in and made his diagnosis: the “evil hand” was upon them.

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## My Notes

Fits identified as satanic possession had broken out among adolescent girls at earlier times in New England. Often their distress was traced to local women who, it was said, had entered into a compact with the Devil and were now recruiting new witches by tormenting the innocent until they succumbed. So the adults in Salem Village began pressing the girls with questions: “Who torments you? Who torments you?” Finally they named three women — Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne — all of them easily recognizable as Satan’s hand-maidens. Tituba was seen as a shameless pagan, Good was a poor beggar given to muttering angrily as she went from house to house and Osborne was known to have lived with her second husband before they were married. The three were arrested and jailed, but the girls’ torments did not cease. On the contrary, fits were spreading like smallpox; dozens more girls and young women went into violent contortions, flailing, kicking and uttering names.

And the names! Rebecca Nurse was 71, the pious and beloved matriarch of a large family; she was hanged in July. George Jacobs, an old man whose servant girl was one of the afflicted, thought the whole lot of them were “bitch witches” and said so; he was hanged in August. Susannah Martin was named, but that surprised nobody; people had been calling her a witch for years. Six or seven years earlier, Barnard Peach testified, he had been lying in bed at night when Martin appeared at his window and jumped into his room; she then lay down upon him and prevented him from moving for nearly two hours. Others had similar tales; Martin was hanged in July. Nor was there much doubt about Dorcas Good, who was arrested soon after her mother, Sarah, was jailed. The afflicted girls cried out that Dorcas was biting and pinching them, and although the attacks were invisible to everyone else, the girls had the bite marks to prove it. Dorcas was jailed with the others, and a special set of chains was made for her. She was only 5, and the regular shackles were too big.

All along, there were townspeople who had misgivings about what was happening. Several came to the defense of some of the accused citizens, and others testified that they had heard an afflicted girl saying she had made at least one accusation “for sport.” But the machinery seemed unstoppable. If a prisoner was released or a jury decided to acquit someone, the girls went into such shrieking torments that the court quickly reversed itself.

### WORD CONNECTIONS

*Symptom* uses the Greek prefix *syn-* meaning “together.” Many English words rely on this prefix, including *sympathy*, *symbol*, *symphony*.

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